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DRAFT REPORT

Addendum

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REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

A. Accountability, management improvement and oversight in the United Nations system

1. At its 8th to 10th meetings, on 6 and 7 June 1996, the Committee considered the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled "Accountability, management improvement and oversight in the United Nations system" (A/50/503 and Add.1).

Discussion

2. Delegations expressed their appreciation to JIU for a good and timely report tackling an extremely complex, but very important, problem addressing mounting concerns of Member States. Many delegations expressed appreciation and broad agreement with this first comprehensive and wide-ranging study and its recommendations. Others pointed to the abstract and general character of the report, leading in certain cases to recommendations of a general nature, as well as to the lack of a comprehensive approach to management improvement within the United Nations system. One delegation thought that was inevitable owing to the nature of the report, while another considered it as a historic base-line for possible future studies. In view of General Assembly resolution 50/233 of 7 June 1996 on JIU, delegations noted that the report was voluminous and urged the Unit to observe the limits established in that resolution.

3. Satisfaction was expressed regarding the system-wide positive trend highlighted in the report of the enhancement of the role of oversight bodies and the distinct roles of internal and external oversight bodies in the work of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. One delegation emphasized that the report confirmed that agencies and organizations should adopt the Office of Internal Oversight Services model, which had proved its worth in the United Nations Secretariat. Another delegation disagreed with that opinion. Some other delegations expressed the opinion that the Office of Internal Oversight Services mandate extended only to the Secretariat and that other bodies of the United Nations system had to adopt their own system of accountability, management improvement and oversight. In that context, those delegations reiterated the independence of each body and the Organization and also emphasized that the scope of application of the Office of Internal Oversight Services was restricted to the United Nations Secretariat. Other delegations regretted the inclusion of managerial concepts in the report (para. 153), which might be considered as promotion of private sectors within the Organization. Those delegations expressed their deep concern at that kind of suggestion, emphasizing the political, universal and intergovernmental character of the Organization, which did not allow it to apply that managerial consideration in its work. Other delegations noted that even intergovernmental bodies needed to be well managed. One delegation highlighted the report's finding that those organizations that had been the most dynamic in pursuing management reforms were those that were funded voluntarily or had had severe funding cuts. The same delegation also indicated that additional resources were not necessarily the solution to management reform, while another delegation was not in agreement with that view.

4. With regard to section VII of the report, many delegations highlighted the role of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in administrative and budgetary questions and expressed their satisfaction with the work done by the Committee and its secretariat, which was highly recognized. In that context, those delegations refused the suggestions of the Inspectors in paragraph 187 of the report regarding possible change in the working procedures of the Committee, which they believed should be maintained as it was. On the question of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, those delegations strongly supported the role of the Committee as the principal subsidiary body of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council with a programme planning and coordination mandate. They also recognized the role of JIU as the only independent system-wide inspection, evaluation and investigation body and in that regard strongly supported its work. Others expressed reservations about the usefulness of the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination given the way it currently functioned and reiterated their support for the proposal to move the Committee's coordination function to the Economic and Social Council. They also noted their intention to consider more fully the role of the Committee, JIU and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in the context of the review of the oversight bodies called for by the General Assembly in its decision 47/454 of 23 December 1992.

5. Recommendation 1. Some delegations supported the recommendation and considered the establishment of the proposed strategic unit to be important, whereas others were of the view that it would have undesirable financial implications by establishing an additional layer of bureaucracy, probably on the

scale of a division. They thought that the tasks of strategic planning and improvement in management and accountability should be pursued through existing services such as departments' executive offices, the Department of Administration and Management and the Office of Internal Oversight Services. One delegation emphasized that while the proposed unit had excessively broad functions, the establishment of an office of strategic planning should be supported. Another delegation pointed out to a contradiction in the terms of reference of the proposed unit, which was to encompass both management and oversight functions, and noted the lack of focus in that idea. In regard to "benchmarking", one delegation noted that the choice of criteria should reflect a diverse experience of Member States in regard to the standards of performance.

6. Recommendation 2 was widely supported, while some delegations criticized its general nature.

7. Recommendation 3 was supported, although some delegations noted that it is too general. One delegation underlined the importance of adopting and enforcing a code of conduct of international civil service.

8. Recommendation 4 was supported and the importance of an effective information systems strategy was underscored.

9. Recommendation 5 was supported, with delegations emphasizing the importance of consistent development of comprehensive management training and career development systems. In that connection, some delegations noted the JIU observation in paragraph 111 that in large agencies with sizeable training programmes, funds had traditionally been oriented towards language training, and emphasized that the shortage of funds should not prevent the development of training beyond the languages area.

10. Recommendation 6. This recommendation found general support from the Committee.

11. Recommendation 7. Most delegations expressed support for this recommendation, although one delegation questioned its meaning.

12. Recommendation 8. Some delegations found this recommendation somewhat obscure and that it mixed the objectives of sound management to be pursued by all programme managers and intergovernmental follow-up of programme performance.

13. Recommendation 9 was supported by many delegations, whereas others questioned the need for a separate annual report. Some delegations also found that it was unclear to whom such a report should be presented.

Conclusions and recommendations

14. The Committee regretted that the comments of the Secretary-General and of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on the JIU report were not available at the time the Committee commenced its consideration of the report. It reiterated that relevant comments of the Secretary-General and of the participating organizations were clearly mandated in the relevant resolutions of

the General Assembly and translated in the statute of the JIU. It requested the Secretariat to make every effort in order to meet the deadlines for offering detailed comments on JIU reports and to ascertain that comments of the Secretary-General and of the executive heads of the participating organizations on the Unit reports selected for consideration by the Committee for Programme and Coordination be issued on time in all the official languages of the United Nations.

15. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the report and endorsed its recommendations 2 to 6, subject to the reservations expressed in paragraphs 5-10 above.